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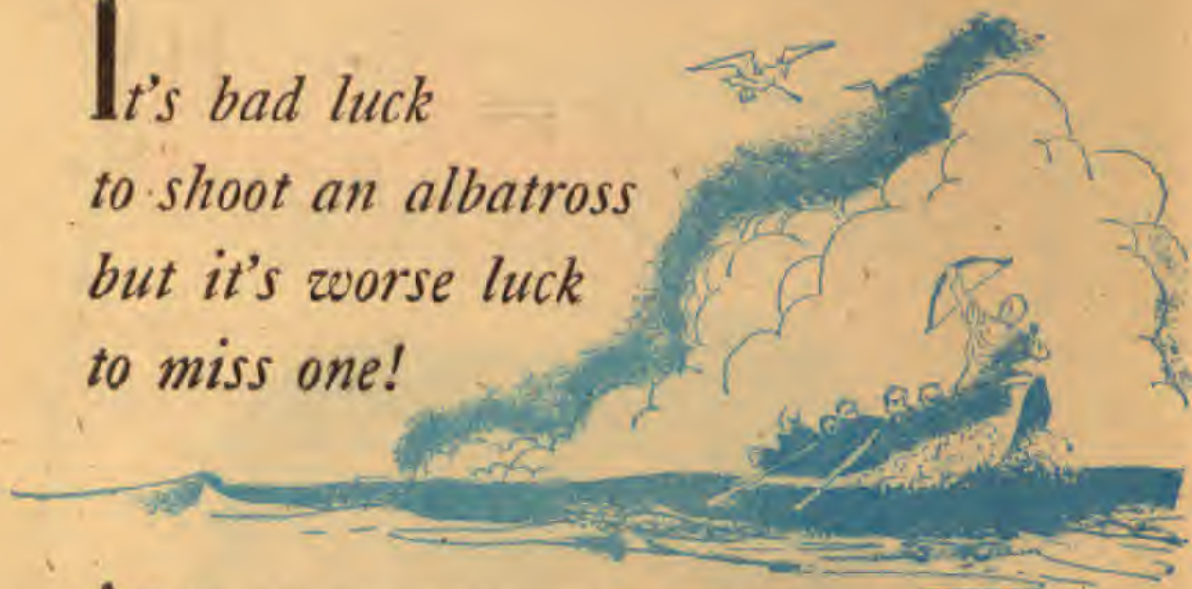
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*It's bad luck
to shoot an albatross
but it's worse luck
to miss one!*



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SHADOW COMICS

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The Shadow

ENCOUNTERS
MONSTRODAMUS
AND HIS
FLYING
SERPENTS



AMONG SECLUDED FOOT-
HILLS STANDS A
STRANGE OLD EDIFICE
KNOWN AS SEVEN
TOWERS... LONG DESERT-
ED IT HAS RECENTLY
BEEN ACQUIRED AND
RESTORED BY AN
UNKNOWN PURCHASER
WHO HAS TREMENDOUS
WEALTH... ONLY THOSE
WHO DWELL THERE
WITH HIM KNOW THE
TRUE IDENTITY OF
THE NEW OWNER OF
SEVEN TOWERS...
TO THEM
HE IS:
MONSTRODAMUS
!!!!



ANOTHER
SHIPMENT
HAS
ARRIVED,
O
MASTER!

WHAT
IS IT,
OPTIMUS?

MAXIMUS AND
FORTISSIMUS
ARE UNLOADING
THE SHIPMENT,
MASTER.

ASSIST THEM WHILE
I SUMMON PRINCESS
THEBA!







WHILE MONSTRODAMUS HATCHES SCHEMES ALONG WITH PREHISTORIC MONSTERS, LAMONT CRANSTON, OTHER-WISE THE SHADOW, SEEKS A TRAIL TO THE HEINOUS VILLAIN WHO THREATENS TO DESTROY CIVILIZATION AND SHAPE HIS OWN WORLD!!!

NO NEW CLUES! YET WE MUST FIND MONSTRODAMUS!

YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME, LAMONT. IT WILL BE A HUNDRED YEARS BEFORE THOSE CREATURES OF HIS GROW UP!

I WOULDN'T BANK ON THAT, MARGO. MONSTRODAMUS MAY HAVE FOUND A WAY TO MAKE THEM THRIVE MORE RAPIDLY.

HERE'S SOMETHING, LAMONT!

HMMM! INTERESTING!

REMARKABLE PERSON!

HENRY BRESLAW COLLECTS PREHISTORIC EGGS

WE ALREADY KNOW THAT MONSTRODAMUS COLLECTS SUCH EGGS--

AND HATCHES THEM!

RIGHT! THEREFORE WE MUST FIND BRESLAW BEFORE MONSTRODAMUS DOES!

MUSEUM

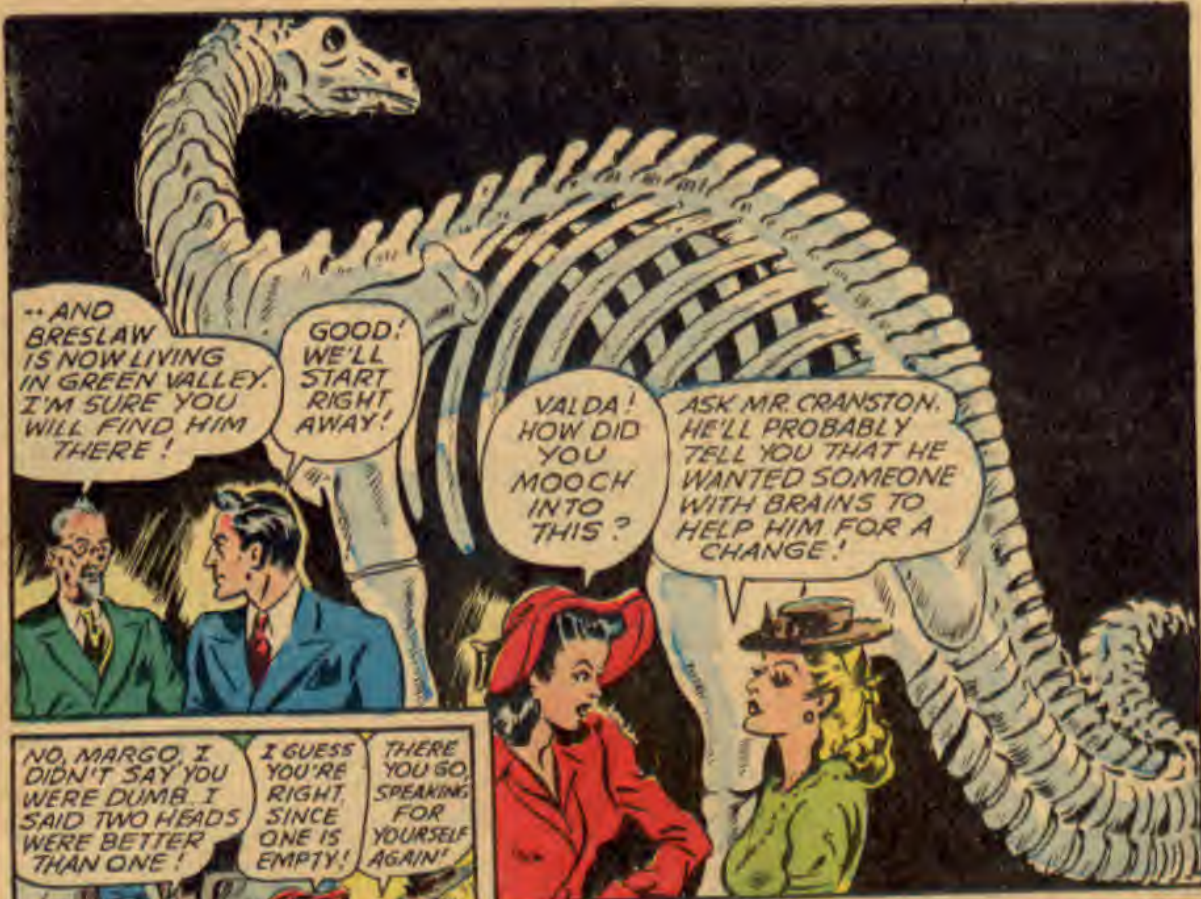
DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING TO FIND BRESLAW HERE?

NO, I'M MERELY HOPING THAT THE CURATOR WILL BE ABLE TO LOCATE HIM.

-- AND WE MUST FIND BRESLAW!

COME BACK TO-MORROW AND I MAY HAVE WORD FOR YOU.





NO, MARGO, I DIDN'T SAY YOU WERE DUMB. I SAID TWO HEADS WERE BETTER THAN ONE!

I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT, SINCE ONE IS EMPTY!

THERE YOU GO, SPEAKING FOR YOURSELF AGAIN!



MEANWHILE...

SO DINOSAURS FEED ON THE FLOWERS OF CENTURY PLANTS!

PRECISELY, AND I HAVE ONE HUNDRED CENTURY PLANTS, EACH FOR A DIFFERENT YEAR. ONE IS ALWAYS IN BLOOM--



-- SO MY PETS CAN ALWAYS EAT. THAT IS WHY THEY GROW SO FAST!

AMAZING! I MUST VISIT YOU SOON. MEANWHILE, SINCE YOUR MAN HAS NOT RETURNED, MY CHAUFFEUR CAN DRIVE YOU HOME.









THAT'S
WHERE
WE'RE
GOING
NEXT.



STRANGLER--
BUT WHO
DID IT?

WHO COULD HAVE?
THIS DOOR IS STILL
BOLTED!

THIS LOOKS
LIKE A REAL
RIDDLE. S



THE USUAL WAY, BY
THE RUMBLE ROUTE.
BUT I'VE SEEN
MONSTRODAMUS!

WE'VE
GOT TO
TRAIL
HIM!



LET MARGO
STAY. I CAN
DRIVE THIS
CAR!

NOT WHILE
I'M IN IT,
YOU
CAN'T!











IN A TRICE, THE FLOCK OF IBIS MOP UP THE ENTIRE HORDE OF FLYING SERPENTS!!!

THERE GOES MONSTRODAMUS!

UNFORTUNATELY WE CAN'T FOLLOW UNTIL THE IBISES COMPLETE THEIR JOB!



I CONGRATULATE YOU, GREAT SHADOW! YOU KNOW WHY THE IBIS IS THE SACRED BIRD OF EGYPT!

OF COURSE, BECAUSE FOR CENTURIES THEY REGULARLY DESTROYED THE FLOCKS OF WINGED SERPENTS THAT TRIED TO MIGRATE FROM ARABIA!

AT LEAST MONSTRODAMUS IS GOOD AT GETTING AWAY!

AND HE TOOK HIS YOUNG MONSTERS WITH HIM!

THE FOOL, TO BE IGNORANT OF THE IBIS LEGEND!

THEREA IS ON OUR SIDE NOW

I WONDER FOR HOW LONG!



AGAIN, THE SHADOW HAS THWARTED MONSTRODAMUS. WATCH HIM RESUME THE TRAIL IN OUR NEXT ISSUE!!!!

THE *Shadow* Finds TOO MANY Ghosts



ILLUSTRATED BY
AL BARE

HERE'S AN INTERESTING PICTURE,
MARGO. AN OLD HOUSE THAT'S
SUPPOSED TO BE HAUNTED!!

IT LOOKS IT!



OLD RUFUS KEENE,
WHO LIVES THERE
BELIEVES IT IS
HAUNTED.



HE LIKES GHOSTS SO WELL,
HE WON'T LEAVE THE PLACE.
AS A RESULT, HE'S LETTING
A CLAIM RUN OUT ON A
GOLD MINE!

HE MUST BE
• WACKY!

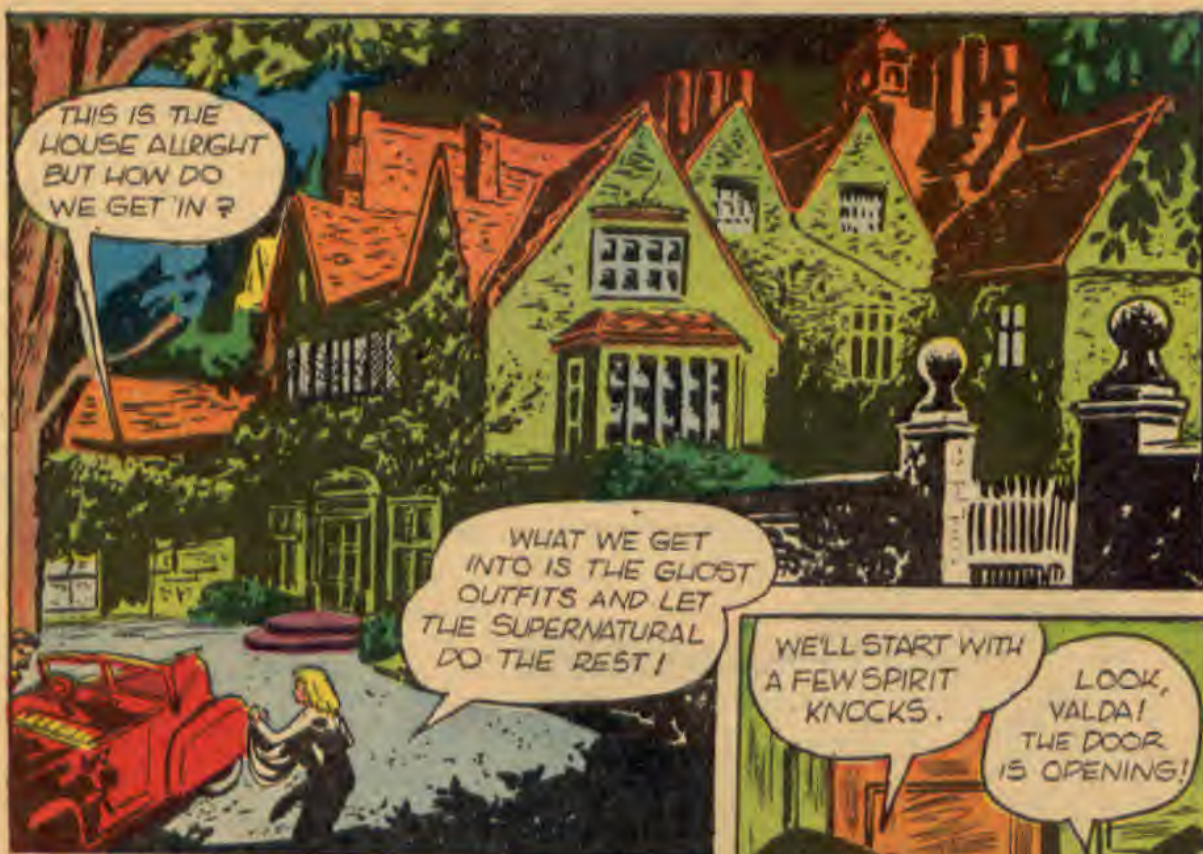




LATER









WHERE IS THE CLANK-
ING OF YOUR
CHAINS?













Beebo

OF JUNGLE ISLE
AND HIS
WONDER HORSE
FLEET IN REVENGE

LEARNING FROM LANONT CRANSTON, WHO IS (THE SHADOW), THAT THE VILLANOUS MAN WHO CAME ASHORE TO HUNT HIM IS THE BLACK-HEARTED UNCLE, JAMES BOTEL, WHO RUINED HIS FATHER'S LIFE, BEEBO VOWS TO KILL HIM. BOTEL, DRIVEN FROM JUNGLE ISLE BY CRANSTON, RETURNS... WITH A HUGE ARMORED SHIP. THE SHADOW, KNIFED IN THE BACK BY THE UNCLE, DECIDES TO TAKE JUSTICE INTO HIS OWN HANDS WHILE BEEBO SLEEPS.



QUIETLY AWAKENING FLEET, CRANSTON WHISPERS INTO HIS EAR

WHEN BEEBO AWAKENS, FLEET, TELL HIM I WILL BE BACK WHEN THE SUN COMES UP WITH GOOD NEWS.



FLEET AND CHEETO WATCH BEEBO'S FRIEND AS HE SILENTLY LOWERS HIMSELF TO THE GROUND.



MINUTES LATER, WITH POWERFUL STROKES, HE IS SWIMMING TOWARD THE SHIP OF THE WICKED UNCLE.



MEANWHILE, BEEBO'S CRUEL UNCLE, JAMES BOTEL, PREPARES AN ARMED INVASION OF THE ISLAND.

LET THOSE WILD ANIMALS TRY AND STOP US. WITH THIS ARMORY, WE'LL LEAVE PLENTY OF VULTURE FOOD IF THEY DO.

REMEMBER, THE TWO WHO MUST SURELY DIE, ARE CRANSTON AND MY SAVAGE NEPHEW!

IT WILL BE LIGHT SOON... WE'LL LOAD UP AND GET TO SHORE BEFORE SUN-UP, AND BE BACK HERE FOR BREAKFAST-- OUR JOB DONE!

THEN NOTHING CAN STOP ME FROM CLAIMING MY LATE BROTHER'S FORTUNE-- I'LL BE RICH!

AT THIS MOMENT, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SHIP--

FROM HERE ON, I'D BETTER BECOME THE INVISIBLE SHADOW!

FLEET-- WHERE IS HE? MY FATHER'S AND MOTHER'S FRIEND?

HE HAS GONE, BUT SAYS HE WILL RETURN BY SUN-UP, WITH GOOD NEWS-- I THINK HE HAS GONE TO THE THING-THAT-WALKS-THE-WATER.

AND NOW-- BEEBO AWAKENS

HE HAS GONE TO KILL THE BLACK-HEARTED-MEN-- I MUST STOP HIM-- FOR IT IS MY FANG THAT MUST KILL THEM!

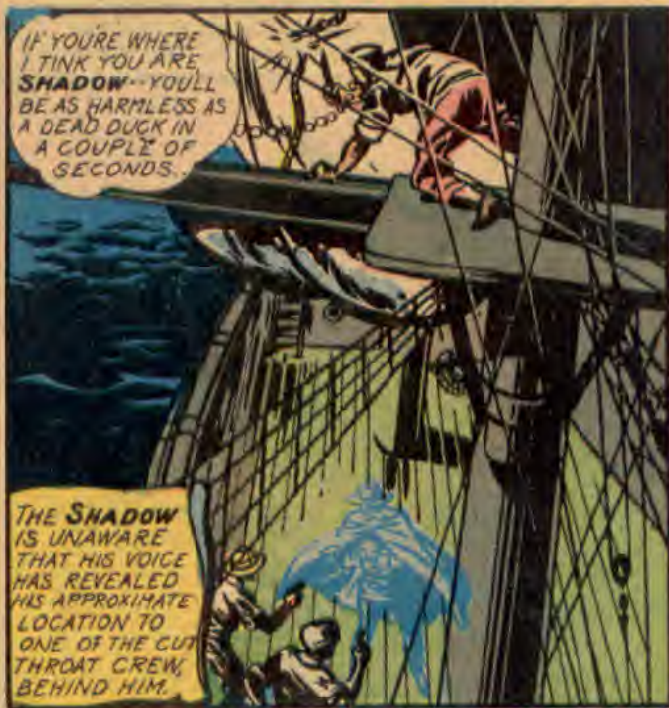
THIS CRANSTON IS WISE-- HE KNOWS BEST-- WAIT HERE UNTIL HE RETURNS.

NO...! THE REVENGE IS MINE ALONE! SO THE KILL IS MINE ALONE. I AM GOING TO THE SHIP!

SWINGING THROUGH THE JUNGLE WITH THE SPEED OF A WINGED CREATURE, BEEBO ALIGHTS ON A HIGH CLIFF...

DROPS TO EARTH; AND, IN A SINGLE BOUND, DIVES OVER.



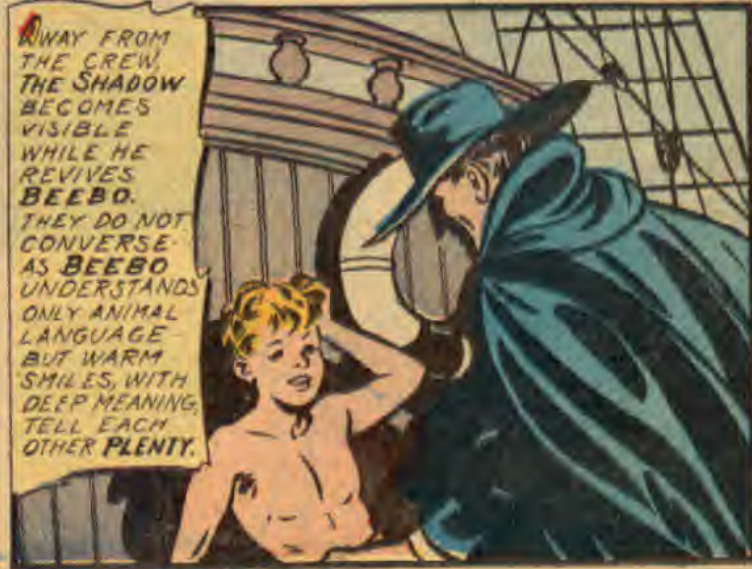




AS HOTEL DRAWS TO FIRE, THE SHADOWS GUNS SPEAK!







MEANWHILE, BULA THE ELEPHANT, HAS LET FLEET DOWN FROM THE TREE - OF - THE - CLOUDS - AND, WITH CHEETO, THEY HAVE GONE TO WATCH THE SHIP IN THE DISTANCE.

THE SUN IS ALMOST UP, WHY DOES NOT OUR GOOD KING BEEBO RETURN?

YOU HEARD THE THUNDER-STICK BOOMING! THE MEN-HUMANS ARE FIGHTING.

OH! YIK! YIK! I HOPE BEEBO AND THE GOOD MAN ARE NOT DEAD!

YOU FLEA-INCUBATOR YOU ALWAYS TALK OF DEATH. BEEBO CAN TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF... AND SO CAN THE MAN FRIEND.

YIK - YIK! I HOPE SO... I HOPE SO... POOR BEEBO! POOR MAN-FRIEND!



GAINING THE BEACH, THE BRAVE FLEET AND THE COMPLAINING CHEETO LEAVE BULA BEHIND AND START THE LONG SWIM... SUDDENLY...

COME! LET US GO DOWN TO THE BEACH.

A GOOD IDEA... CHEETO AND I WILL SWIM OUT TO THE THING-THAT-WALKS-THE-WATER-MAYBE WE CAN HELP.

YIK-YIK... I WILL GO... BUT I'LL LOSE A YEAR OF LIFE WITH FRIGHT! I HATE WATER!



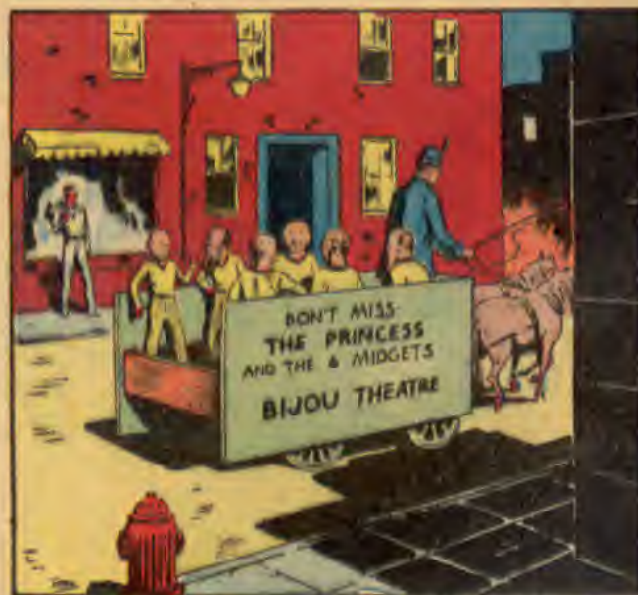
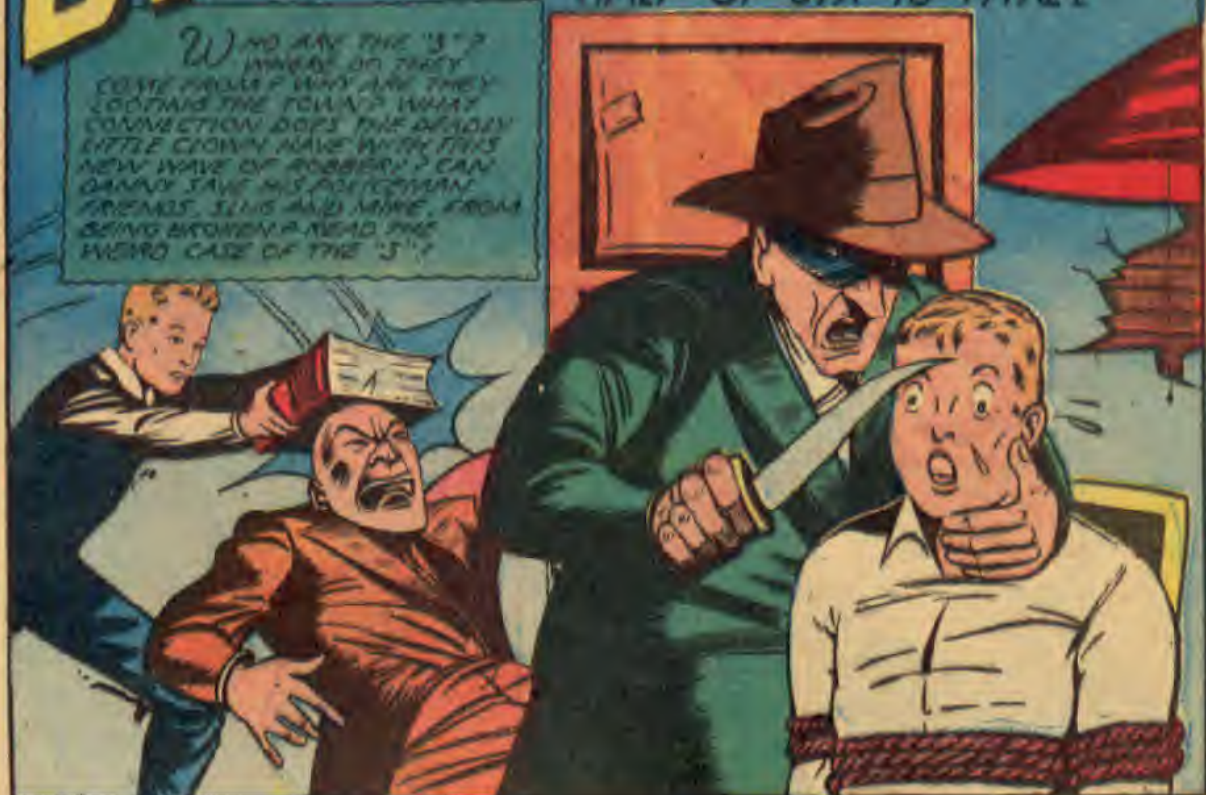
POOR BEEBO! POOR MAN FRIEND! IF THEY WERE ON THERE... THEY ARE BOTH DEAD, NOW!

WERE BEEBO AND THE SHADOW TRAPPED UPON THE EXPLODING SHIP? DID BOTEI AND HIS MURDEROUS CREW ESCAPE? AND IF THEY DID WHAT GOOD WILL THE STOLEN INHERITANCE DO BOTEI WHEN HE IS DESTINED TO LIVE OUT HIS LIFE ON THIS UNCHARTED ISLE?

DANNY GARRETT

in
"HALF OF SIX IS THREE"

WHO ARE THE "J"s?
WHERE DO THEY
COME FROM? WHY ARE THEY
GOING THE OTHER WAY?
CONNECTION DOES THE DADDY
LITTLE CROWN HAVE WITH THIS
NEW WAVE OF ROBBERY? CAN
DANNY SAVE HIS POLICEMAN
FRIENDS, JIM AND MIKE, FROM
BEING BROKEN? READ THE
HISORY CASE OF THE "J"s!











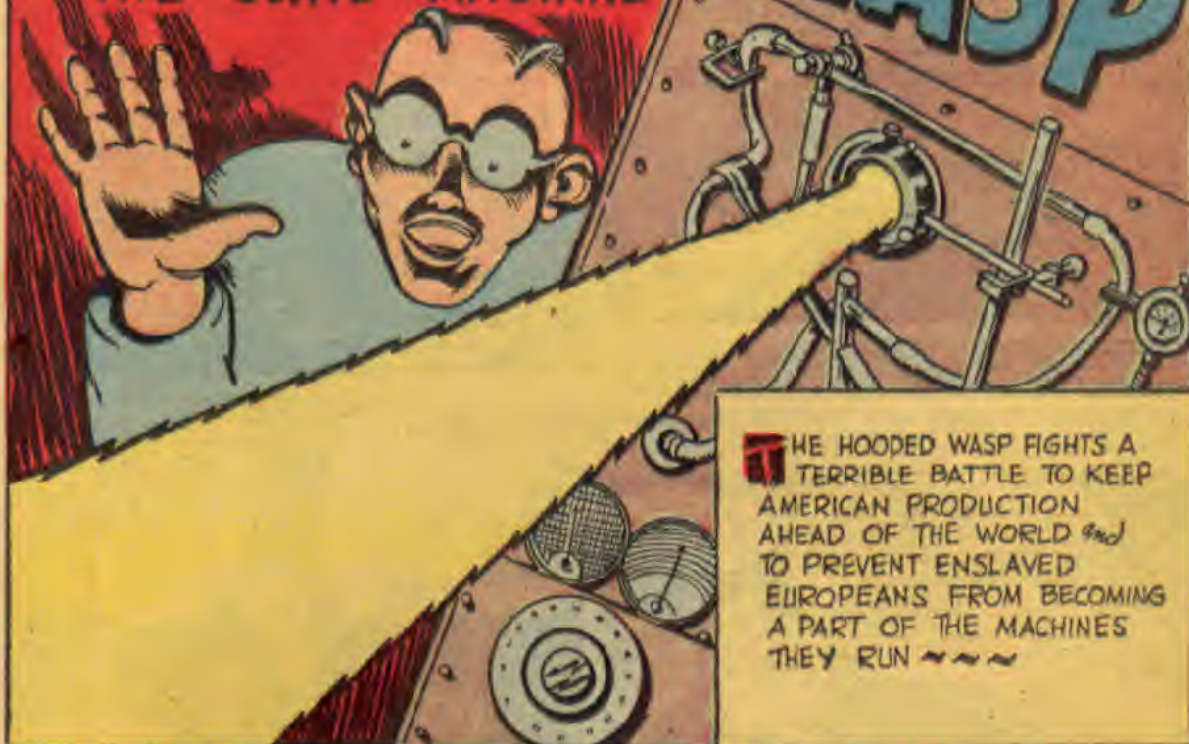






The HOODED WASP

THE SLAVE MACHINE



THE HOODED WASP FIGHTS A TERRIBLE BATTLE TO KEEP AMERICAN PRODUCTION AHEAD OF THE WORLD *and* TO PREVENT ENSLAVED EUROPEANS FROM BECOMING A PART OF THE MACHINES THEY RUN ~ ~ ~

IN THE LABORATORY OF ZERKO MULESK, INVENTOR, A DEMONSTRATION IS HELD FOR THE ARMY & NAVY...

OBSERVE— I FLASH THE RAY UPON THE MONKEY IN THE CAGE... THE RAY PARALYZES CERTAIN SECTIONS OF ITS BRAIN SO THAT IT BECOMES A SLAVE TO THE THING IT IS DOING!

YES! IN WAR PLANTS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY, WE CAN FREEZE WORKERS TO THEIR MACHINES IN THE SAME WAY!

NO WORKER WILL BE ABLE TO QUIT OR STOP... HE BECOMES PART OF HIS MACHINE! WHEN HE WEARS OUT... DIES... LIKE ANY OTHER PART, HE WILL BE REPLACED!

YOU'RE MAD!

YOU MEAN IT WILL HANG THERE FOREVER?

THIS INFERNAL MACHINE MUST BE DESTROYED!





IT WAS NOT LONG BEFORE ZERKO MULESK REBUILT HIS INFERNAL SLAVE MACHINE AND HAD OTHER GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES IN TO VIEW IT.... AXIS AGENTS!



SEVERAL NIGHTS LATER....



A SHORT TIME LATER, JIM GORDON, WHO IS THE HOODED WASP, IS VISITED BY THE SAME ARMY & NAVY REPRESENTATIVES WHO INVESTIGATED ZERKO MULESK'S SLAVE MACHINE.

--- AND SO, GORDON, INCENSED BY THE HORRIBLE IDEA... WE SMASHED THE MACHINE AND STAMPED OUT HIS LABORATORY!

IT OCCURED TO US THAT A MAD MAN LIKE MULESK MIGHT TRY TO SELL HIS IDEA TO THE AXIS-- EVEN WIN THE WAR WITH SUCH A MACHINE!

IT WOULD BE THEIR STRONGEST WEAPON!

THROUGH COUNTER-ESPIONAGE AGENTS, WE'VE DISCOVERED OUR WORST FEARS HAVE COME TRUE... MULESK SOLD OUT TO THE NAZIS... HE'S IN GERMANY RIGHT NOW BUILDING HUNDREDS OF THOSE MACHINES!

UNLESS HE'S STOPPED... THIS WAR MAY LAST FOR YEARS AND YEARS!



GORDON... AS THE HOODED WASP, YOU ARE THE GREATEST FIGHTING DETECTIVE IN THE WORLD! WILL YOU TAKE THE JOB OF GOING TO GERMANY?

.... FINDING AND STRAPPING MULESK?

I... I HOPE I CAN SUCCEED! I ACCEPT THE COMMISSION!!

FLOWN TO ENGLAND----AND THENCE TO GERMANY IN A FLYING FORTRESS, THE HOODED WASP AND HIS YOUNG ASSISTANT, WASPLET, BAIL OUT IN A BARRAGE OF --- ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE ---



FROM THE LOOKS OF THOSE TREE TOPS... IT'LL BE SCRATCHY!

HAPPY LANDINGS, WASPLET!



NO SOONER ARE THEIR CHUTES PULLED IN, THAN A NAZI PATROL PASSES UNDERNEATH...









THE NEXT INSTANT... TWO FURYS OF FREEDOM SMASH INTO ZERKO'S LABORATORY!





The Shadow

Versus The Money Master



This
AMAZING
STORY STORY
BEGINS AT
THE CLUB
CHICHI,
WHERE
VALDA RINE
IS APPEARING
AS A STAR

STORY BY
MAXWELL
GRANT
PICTURES BY
CHARLES COLE

A LOT OF THINGS ARE
GOING ON AROUND
HERE THAT THE
SHADOW OUGHT TO
KNOW ABOUT.

MANAGER

AN ALIBI COSTS
DOUGH, SHEP,
AND YOU
HAVEN'T ANY.

BUT WE THOUGHT
ELVOR, BRULE
WAS WELL
HEELED!

I COULD HAVE TOLD
YOU BRULE WAS
BROKE. YOU SHOULD
HAVE KNOCKED OFF
SOMEBODY ELSE!

OH
OH















LITTLE RED BUCKAROO

BY NED STRONG

ROCKY WILLINGHAM was not older than twenty, red-headed, slender almost to scrawiness. He had the disposition of a rattlesnake in shedding time—and he was much more dangerous, for no sidewinder could strike as quickly as Rocky could shoot. Those who hold that all human beings have at least one good trait did not know Rocky Willingham.

Benny Orr had red hair, was young and slim almost to scrawiness, too. He rode a strange trail in a strange State, now. The sun was high and hot, and Benny was worn and hungry. Somebody had told him that he'd hit cattle country if he kept riding west, but as yet he hadn't seen a single cow brute, or much of anything, except rock and scrub.

At the point where his trail ran into another one, Benny reined his buckskin cow pony to a halt, and an oath of surprise slipped between his teeth. There in the trail fork, on a lean, sunburned horse, sat Rocky Willingham!

The outlaw's voice was cold, his pale-blue eyes deadly as he greeted Benny with a brief: "Hi!"

"This just can't be beat," Benny drawled in reply. "Six sheriffs in Texas picked me up and jailed me, thinkin' I was you, on account we look so much alike. One of them nearly put the wrong kind o' necktie on me. The same in Nueva Mex. Now, here I am in Arizona, still huntin' a place where I can live in peace, and you hafta show up again. Back in Nueva Mex you told me you was goin' to stay there. How come you didn't?"

"Changed my mind," Rocky sneered.

"Look, Rocky. You maybe don't know it, but I'm as handy with a gun as you are. And after this, I'm done runnin'. The next time you do somethin' that's packed on me, I'll round you up and turn you over to the law—or one o' us will bite dirt."

It was a little after mid-morning of the next day when Benny rode out of the semidesert country and into a wide valley, the beginning of cattle country. The tops of the houses in the town showed in the sunlight far below. Benny spurred his buckskin in that direction.

He still had a few dollars and, reaching the town, went first to the livery stable where he left his pony for feed and a rubdown. He had just spotted a restaurant and was heading that way when a heavy hand clamped down on his shoulder from behind, and a heavy voice blasted in his ear.

"You sure have got a nerve, red kid! Stick 'em straight up or I'll blow a whole section out o' your backbone!"

A cold steel muzzle was against Benny's spine. He raised his hands and turned his head to see his accuser—a tall, grizzled man with a sheriff's star pinned to his shirt pocket.

"So it's Rocky Willingham again!" Orr said bitterly. "I didn't know he'd been here, or I wouldn't 'a' come. Too danged bad I had to be borned with a red top like Rocky's."

"Yeah—ain't it!" Sheriff George Frawley snapped. He'd taken possession of Benny's six-shooter. "I never did see anybody with a nerve like yours. Even rode the same hoss back. Did you think a bandanna mask would hide your red hair, too?"

"Rocky's hoss is a sun-scalded sorrel and looks a heap like my buckskin," Orr admitted.

"You're smart, all right," the sheriff granted. "Smart enough to hide your trail, anyhow. Reckon you figured it'd be a good joke on me, you coming right back in less than three hours for grub and hoss feed. Did you think me and my deputies'd stay out all day when we couldn't even find a hoss track?"

"Less than 'three hours!" Benny repeated the lawman's words. "What did Rocky Willingham pull here?"

"As if you don't know!" Sheriff Frawley scoffed.

Five minutes later, Benny stood at a jail-cell window listening to the talk out in the street. Willingham had shot and killed an employee of the bank because he wouldn't give up all the money in sight. The dead man had been popular, and the townsfolk were riled. Benny was in a tight spot, all right!

His grim thoughts were interrupted as Sheriff George Frawley and his one-eyed old jailer came to the iron-latticed cell door. The sheriff

carried a wanted-man circular that had come to him through the mails. He read the text to his new prisoner. The description, of course, fitted Benny Orr perfectly.

"And you think I don't know who you are red kid?" Frawley finished.

"Rocky Willingham killin' somebody in Texas and Nueva Mex is no news to me," Benny replied sulkily. "But if you'll send me back to one o' them States to be tried before I'm tried here, I'm bettin' I can prove I'm not Rocky."

"You'll be tried here first," the sheriff said. "It'll have to be tomorrow to satisfy the dead man's friends, and if you don't hang the day after I'll miss a good guess!"

Benny stiffened. No chance to communicate with people who knew him in Texas and New Mexico!

In desperation, then, Benny told the sheriff all there was to tell. He looked hopefully at the lawman as he finished.

"Expect me to believe that cock-and-bull story?" was the sheriff's only comment as he walked away.

Orr turned to the cell window again. More and more people were gathering on the street outside, and the talk was hotter. Benny could see why he'd have to be tried quickly. He'd never been in a spot so tight. Escape was his only hope. And the sooner the better his chance of overtaking Rocky Willingham and making good his promise.

The redhead thought of all the jail-break tricks he'd heard about, and decided upon the only one that seemed possible. His wooden bunk frame furnished the necessary tool. He managed to get an arm-length piece off, and had just hidden it under the blanket when the one-eyed old jailer came with his dinner on a tray.

"Sure thank you," Benny said to the man. "I'm hungry enough to eat a raw wolf. Looks like a nice dinner, too."

He was sitting on the bunk now. The jailer had a gun on his hip, a "dragoon" Colt. He watched Orr closely as he unlocked the iron door.

"Too bad," he whispered. "I heard what you tol' George Frawley about you and another red kid, and I nearly believed you. That's why I brang you such a good dinner."

"Aw shucks," the youthful prisoner blurted, disconcerted by the old jailer's near belief in him. "Now I can't knock you out when you

bend over to set my supper on the floor. I was gonna take your gun and hightail out o' here with it!"

He snatched the short piece of bunk frame from under the blanket and tossed it aside.

The jailer's one good eye twinkled, and he chuckled. "Don't you be a-wearyin' too much, little red buckaroo."

So Benny Orr wasn't surprised when, after twilight had thickened, but before the corridor bracket lamp was lighted, he found the cell door unlocked. The jailer had just left with the empty supper tray.

Benny stole through the corridor to the rear, then was gone. To take his pony and saddle from the livery stable without being seen was a more difficult task. But he accomplished it.

Now to look up Rocky Willingham. Benny tried to put himself in the outlaw's place.

"I wouldn't go east, if I was him. Too much hard, dry country. I think it's the same to the north. South lays Mexico. Wouldn't go there till I was crowded more'n Rocky is. So west is the best bet. That Palo Verde Wells place, maybe."

Benny's buckskin was fresh now, and he pushed it. Rocky wouldn't stop anywhere for more than an hour or so, not until after he'd put worth-while distance between him and the scene of his latest crime.

Orr began looking for a road leading westward, and found it. His gun hand strayed to his empty holster. A wonder, he told himself, that the sheriff hadn't taken his belt and holster, too. But there were only three cartridges in the belt. As for hunting the red-headed desperado without a weapon—Benny would manage that, somehow.

His mind kept busy—Rocky Willingham hadn't ridden along here, or the sheriff would have found his running trail. Rocky had known that and he wouldn't take to the road for easier riding until he was much farther away.

After a few hours, Benny came to the mouth of a dim trail that cut in from northwestward. He reined in and stepped from his saddle. Bending low, he began looking for fresh running hoofprints.

They were spaced closely, and a little later they turned off the trail and vanished in a great nest of boulders.

The redhead led his buckskin into chaparral tall enough to hide the animal, and went ahead

cautiously on foot. Scarcely ten minutes had passed when he peered around the edge of a boulder to see exactly what he had hoped for—a slim figure supine on the ground, a sun-burned sorrel horse standing with its weight on three legs, and the dim embers of a fire.

Benny eased out of the shadow and into the brilliant moonlight. There was less than two yards between him and the outlaw's six-shooter when the young desperado sat up with a jerk. Benny stopped in his tracks and said, evenly: "Hi, Rocky."

"So it's you," the lean gunman grunted. His hand covered the butt of his gun. "Where's your hoss?"

"Cain't you see I'm afoot?"

Willingham rose, unleathering his six-shooter. He leveled the weapon menacingly. "Take me to your buckskin. You can have my sorrel." Then, glancing at the high moon, he muttered an oath. "I been here too long now. Let's go!"

Benny caught his breath. What a fix he'd got himself into—furnishing the outlawed red kid a pony to ride, having to take a lamed horse in its place! And Rocky had noticed his empty holster.

"So you lost your gun!" he sneered. "I get it! You rode into that town after I left, and they grabbed you for killin' the bank jigger. You got loose and lit out to round me up like you promised you would—and no gun. Ain't that just too bad!"

Benny fought for time. "How come, Rocky, you didn't ride north off o' that Palo Verde trail?"

"I changed my mind," Rocky smirked, elevating the muzzle of his weapon a little. "Take me to your buckskin and hustle, or I'll cut you down and find the pony myself!"

Benny knew he meant it, too. The one hope he had now was to get the outlaw's six-shooter pointing in another direction, if only for a few seconds. This would give him just about half a chance.

"So I can have your sorrel, Rocky?" he said calmly and stepped across the remains of the fire to pick up the sorrel's rein.

Rocky turned, his six-shooter still a deadly menace. The gunman's back was to the faintly glowing embers now.

Benny looked the horse over appraisingly. "Saddle and bridle looks to be all right. Well, I reckon there ain't anything for me to do, 'cept to swap with you, on account—"

A sudden, muffled explosion sounded. Rocky wheeled, his murderous weapon lined the other way. In a flash Benny Orr was upon the outlaw. His left arm was tight around Rocky's throat, his right hand gripping the barrel of the gun. The two men struggled furiously. Benny's strength was almost superhuman, the strength of sheerest desperation, for to lose this struggle meant the end of everything so far as he was concerned.

Benny's choking arm at last got in its work and the outlaw's gun was free in his hand. Benny struck hard with it. Rocky fell, going down in a lump heap.

When Rocky Willingham opened his pale eyes, he found himself on the floor of Sheriff George Frawley's office. He could see the sheriff and a deputy, the old jailer, and Benny Orr. The jailer was talking to Orr.

"Well, little red buckaroo, I'll tell you how come I turned you loose. I ain't never been above battin' on a hoss. So I thinks, why not bet on a man?"

"Good bet this time, too, but don't try it again," the sheriff drawled. "You, Orr. What was you saying about the three cartridges you had left in the belt I didn't take off o' you?"

Benny grinned. "I said it was them that gimme the half a chance I had out there. When I stepped across Rocky's fire, I dropped the cartridges into it. They blowed up and Rocky thought somebody was shootin' at him!"

"Smart, ain't you?" The outlaw spat venomously on the floor.

"Smart enough," drawled Benny, "to fix up a way to ride range in peace, anyhow. And another thing. After I told you I'd round you up for the law the next time you stuck my neck in a noose, I didn't change my mind!"

THE END.



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